

Creating awareness

The Persona Doll Approach (PDA) is an innovative, interactive way to raise and address issues of inclusion, diversity and identity with children and adults. Persona Doll Training (PDT) South Africa trains and support teachers, child carers, community workers and trainers in the use of Persona Dolls to tackle issues ranging from HIV and AIDS stigma, racism, xenophobia, gender, disability to social class and diversity. The PDA promotes empathy and develops life skills such as problem solving, language and emotional literacy.



Meet our team

Our team of experienced anti-bias trainers includes: Thikam Pillay, Blossom Ngwevela (ELRU), Kim Andreoli, Pam O'Brien, Sue Baillie, Carohn Cornell, Pat Birkett, Mimi Bathela, Rose Jakuja, and Sue Rosie. Gene August handles training logistics, liaising between trainers, schools, early childhood development (ECD) training organisations and centres, and departmental officials.



Persona doll on air!

Trainers Carol and Kim joined 'Casey', a boy Doll from George, in an interview with well-known radio personality Nancy Richards. This was a great opportunity to broadcast to a new audience how Persona Dolls can be used – in classrooms and communities.

Case study: addressing HIV stigma



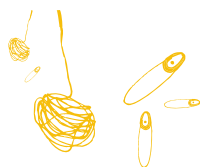
Meet Miriam. She is 8 years old. She lives in Genadendal with her parents, her siblings and her aunt. Her aunt, who is HIV positive, stays with them so that she can visit the HIV clinic nearby. Miriam regularly visits a class of Grade 1 pupils. Their teacher uses Miriam to find out what the pupils know about HIV, explore their attitudes and build empathy and understanding. She starts by telling the class:

"Miriam is a bit upset today. Remember her Aunty Theresa is HIV positive? Well, yesterday Miriam asked her friend Mark to come and play. But Mark said: 'No I don't want to get AIDS ... My mother says your Aunty Theresa has AIDS.'"

The teacher then gets the class talking and helping Miriam 'resolve' the problem by asking:

"How do you think Miriam feels? How would you feel if your friend said that to you? Why do you think Mark said that? Is he right? How can Miriam help Mark understand HIV better? What would you do if you were Miriam?"

During the discussion, the teacher gets the chance to correct misinformation, reinforce attitudes and build problem-solving skills and empathy.



Feedback

We value highly the feedback we receive from people who have received Persona Doll training about how they use our anti-bias tools and training in their daily work. Here is what some had to say ...

"What a journey this has been and continues to be! We are so grateful that the Persona Dolls were introduced into our project. This tool has opened up both teachers and children."

"Using the Doll regularly in the classroom has helped develop the children's listening skills and creative questioning skills and increase their self-confidence and self-esteem."

"We have used the Doll to introduce children's fears and insecurities to their parents. We found this really opened up discussions and helped us work toward solutions."

"The Doll Mai is an integral part of her class ... there is a Zimbabwean child in the class. Mai is Chinese but they can share what it feels like to live in a country where you were not born."

Building skills in partnership

Our partnership with the Western Cape Education Department's HIV and Aids Programme has given us the opportunity to train Foundation Phase educators from across the region – in Athlone, Bellville, Crossroads, Riversdale, Ceres, Stellenbosch, Grabouw, Swellendam, Vredendal, Darling, Picketberg, Montagu and Outdshoorn.

During follow-up support sessions, participants shared powerful stories of discrimination and exclusion. Their feedback underlined the need for real transformation and the importance of more anti-bias work to heal old – and new – wounds for teachers and children alike. This informed the development of fact sheets on key issues such as homophobia, racism and gender-based violence. It was also interesting to hear how special needs teachers had adapted the Dolls, based on their learners' particular challenges and difficulties.

Updates

Hermanus Persona Doll project

PDT has provided training, dolls, and follow-up support in the classroom to two groups of Foundation Phase and ECD practitioners in the Hermanus area, in partnership with The Enlighten Trust.

'KZN Training of trainers'

A key to the success of the PDA lies in ongoing support for trainers. Our recent 'Training of Trainers' course in Durban was attended by 19 women from Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE), Media in Education Trust (MiET), Active Learning Libraries, The Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative (REPSI), Clare Ellis Brown Pre Primary School, Community Child Development Project (St Philomenas) and New Beginnings. During daily 'sharing', it was deeply moving to learn of the extent of many participants' personal suffering and the challenges they face. Many of these women are actively involved in providing support to orphans and vulnerable children, and it was inspiring to see how they 'held' and supported one another.



The people behind the persona dolls

PDT supports local Doll-making groups. In the past year "Afrodizia", based in Paarl and Mbwekweni and led by Juanita Bosch, has created over 1 000 dolls! Fifteen people, many of them HIV positive, have been trained and are now earning an income. We are delighted to report that a new farm-based group in the Free State, "Ebony and Ivory", have begun making beautiful Dolls.

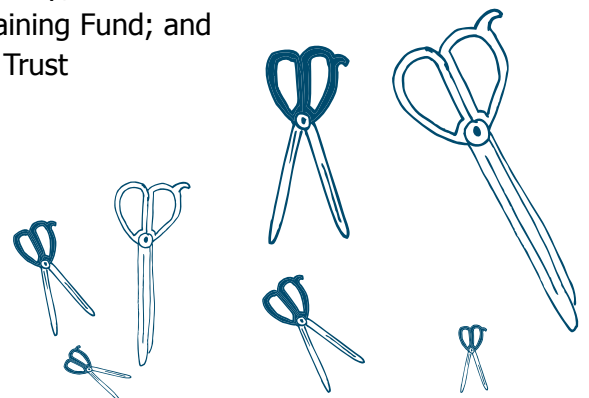


World Cup

Lesedi Educare Association used the Persona Dolls with parents and children, to highlight the excitement of the World Cup and to highlight concerns around the safety of young children. PDT worked with groups of childcare workers, children and coordinators in rural communities in KZN, through the Isibindi 'Creating Circles of Care' 'National Association of Child Care Workers (NACCW), with Persona Dolls for the big event!

Acknowledgements

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Provincial update

PDT provides training and support to various organisations across the country.

In the Free State we work with the Lesedi Educare Association and their "Integrated ECD Care Package"; the Hantam Community Trust near Colesberg; Ntataise, and Tshepang Educare Trust in Smithfield (where our trainer Sue Rosie is based).

In Kwazulu Natal, we work with Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE), Mdumbi and Khululeka Community Development Centre in the Eastern Cape, Sithuthukile Trust as well as Golang Kulani Early Learning Centre in Mpumalanga and Faranani Trust in Limpopo. In Johannesburg PDT provided training at Vuleka School Project, a church-based organisation running many ECD centres for poor inner-city children and their communities.

In the Western Cape, after a workshop for the Custoda Khayamandi ECD preschool training project they are now making their own Persona Dolls! We also gave a workshop at the Independent Schools (ISASSA) ECD conference in Knysna, as well as further preschool training in the town.

PDT is engaged in ongoing research projects and activities including:

- A pilot project with Intermediate Phase teachers in the Atlantis area showing good results with children in Grades 4–6;
- A study examining the Persona Doll approach (PDA) in ECD settings and the anti-bias themes which emerged from teachers and children, PDT member Carol Smith's M Phil dissertation (available on request);
- An ongoing study exploring the use of the PDA in integrated ECD home, community and centre-based ECD settings, including developing a participatory strategy for monitoring and evaluating impact;
- Presentations in Stellenbosch at the UNICEF Knowledge Building Seminar and at the Kenton Conference "Education as Performance";
- A study with Professor Viv Bozalek and University of the Western Cape (UWC) social work students using the PDA as an anti-oppressive technique (article in 'Social Work' journal August 2010 Volume 46 No 3).



contact us

To book training, order Dolls, make a donation or find out more, call 021 788 4365, email: personadolls@jaywalk.com or visit <http://www.persona-doll-training.org>

